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2

The Revolution

OUR bus had been travelling across monotonous scrub country for several hours. The road was excellent, but the journey uncomfortable in the heat of the afternoon sun. The goats on the roof had not stopped screaming since we left Kaolak and the hair of two Mauretanian women sitting in front of me exuded a suffocating odour of rancid butter, with which it was greased, attracting a large swarm of flies. The bus had a drowsy lethargic atmosphere in which we could neither sleep nor think.

After we had been travelling for what seemed an eternity, the skyline was broken by some small hills, covered with lemon-leafed trees. I cannot adequately describe the visual relief those hills afforded. For their significance, they might have been mountains. Towards evening we left these hills behind us and our road quite suddenly came upon the sea, which stretched out before us an undecided compromise between grey and blue. Its shore was skirted by mud huts, from which hung long fishing nets, tied to gaily painted canoes.

There was a sudden stir in the front of the bus. A voice cried: 'Dakar, ici Dakar.' I looked beyond the fretwork silhouette of the fishing village, beyond the cold grey of the sea to an incredible backdrop: a vast city of giant houses, gleaming in the late sun, rode the horizon like some fantastic flotilla of the future.

'Dakar, ici Dakar.' The voice cried once more and the excited passengers took up the refrain.

Our bus pulled up into a large lorry station, in a part of Dakar whose resemblance to the Motte-Picquet-Grenelle suburb of Paris immediately struck me, except that Africans had been substituted for Algerians. At once there was a mad scramble to get

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out of the bus and it was only with difficulty that Arnold and I managed to extricate ourselves. We took a taxi, at almost greater cost than the journey from Kaolak to Dakar, to a dingy little hotel, in the old quarter of the city. To reach it we passed through the centre of Dakar. Trees lined the streets and the architecture of both offices and houses was admirably suited to its tropical setting. It was at once evident that Dakar was a city and not just a town that had, like Lagos, rambled and sprawled and got too big. With its statuesque young skyscrapers and its wide streets, Dakar seemed a model city for the new West Africa. It was neither distinctly African nor European, but had its affinity with the modern cities of South America.

Arnold, accustomed to the higgledy-piggledy, chaotic sprawl of Lagos, and the quiet Victorian dignity of Freetown, could not quite take this in. He seemed almost to resent it as an imposition on Africa, as something that was not African. True, I found that against this background the African appeared, at first, to be an intruder. Nothing seemed more incongruous than a vast Jollof belle, dressed in her traditional robes of lace and muslin, sweeping past the more outrageous examples of *cinema moderna* architecture, or standing pensively beneath a marble plaque depicting a naked African surrounded by the fruits of progress. More incongruous still was the sight of them being spooned in and out of fast American cars or staring into patisserie windows—just imagine one of those muslin cocoons tackling a chocolate éclair. Yet the Africans seemed to have accepted their surroundings with such aplomb that very soon I was to feel that it was the Europeans who were out of place. There seemed nothing unnatural in half a dozen Africans making up their bed for the night on the pavement outside a twelve-story bank, or the young men in tight jeans standing on the street corners eyeing passing girls, just like Saturday night back at the Buildings.

We stayed one night in the Hotel des Fleurs, the cheapest I could find in Dakar. It was owned by a Lebanese, and for Dakar, a city which is almost prohibitive in price for an Englishman, it was remarkably cheap. A haircut in Dakar is 12s., and it has one of the highest cost of living indices in the world.

That night when I entered a bar called appropriately 'Café de Paris', I was unable to believe that we were still in Africa. It had

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369 all the accoutrements of a Montmartre bistro, together with a
275 large, bad painting of the Sacré Coeur above the bar. Drinks were served by a tall barmaid, with long flaxen hair and make-up applied so that she looked like a German-doll: The clientele was mainly composed of soldiers from the barracks by the sea-front, but at our table sat two elegant Jollof girls, both very drunk.
[548] They made it fairly clear they were prostitutes and it was not long before a policeman came to arrest the more intoxicated of the two. She spat, screamed furiously and struggled to break away. Just as she was about to enter the car, she demanded: 'Let me finish my drink.' She was allowed to return to her table, where she drank her beer slowly, eyeing us all as if we were vermin. Then just as slowly, with the comic dignity that comes so naturally to a drunk, she swept to her feet, stood with her henna'd hands on her hips, spat with incredible accuracy at the feet of a nearby soldier and shouted in a voice ringing with anger, and looking at us with contempt: 'Salauds.'

Then an African sergeant came in, asked for a drink, which
[563] the flaxen doll served him. She served African and European alike. I found this hard to believe after the Gambia, where no white woman could serve drinks behind a bar to Europeans, let alone to Africans.

369 Next morning, I was even more surprised when Arnold took
563 me into a large department store and pointed to the counter-girls. Seventy-five per cent of them were white. Outside a French-woman was selling vegetables at a small stall. Of course, in this respect Dakar is exceptional for West Africa. It is the only city
[162] with a large population of Colons. Over 25,000 Europeans live there. They came from every walk of life and have more affinity with the Colons of Algeria than anything else one can cite on the Coast. You can walk into the most ramshackle bar and yet be served by a Parisienne. You will find poor whites living in the Médina, as the African quarter is known. Each year, 'Les Girls' from a Paris night club do a season at the *Bodega*. The N'Gor Hotel and the 'Croix du Sud' are as fine as you will find in France. Dakar's Colons have re-created Paris in Africa. Most of them have never ventured out of the city, and if they had to go into 'the bush' they would probably prepare for it as though they were Mungo Park setting out to discover the Niger.

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Arnold was critical of these Colons, for in British West Africa there is no such class. Indeed he seemed almost to resent their presence, though he has no dislike of Europeans. His opinion is shared by a number of Africans who come into competition with whites for jobs.

'In Lagos the counter girls are African. Why shouldn't they be here?' Arnold argued.

On the other hand in Lagos service and shopping facilities are infinitely inferior to those of Dakar. Another thing that struck Arnold was the absence of Africans from the main cafés and hotels. Surely this indicated a subtle colour bar, he argued. However, I had the answer to this from an African whom I invited to have a drink in a café with me. He declined, because as a Muslim it would not do for him to be seen in a café by any of his friends or relations. If they did see him there would be terrible trouble.

S [873] [369]

W [563]

The Jollofs, Dakar's main tribe, are proud of their race and not over-keen on mixing with whites. Nevertheless relations between African and European in Dakar are extremely cordial. France is still aware of the debt that she owes the Senegalese troops for their part in the last war. There is, moreover, none of the patronizing attitude in the French approach to the African. If anything, as many French complain, the Jollof is the one who does the patronizing.

S 123 [815]

We went from the Hotel de Fleurs to some rooms in IFAN, the Institut Français D'Afrique Noire, which were lent us by its Director, Professor Theodore Monod, whom I had met on my last visit to Dakar. Professor Monod is one of the most impressive men I have ever met. He received us both in his large, book-lined office without looking up from his work. We both fumbled and fidgeted nervously studying the pictures on the wall, many of which were religious paintings or texts from the Bible. When I was beginning to feel acutely embarrassed, he looked up from his work revealing a gaunt, hollow face with deep-set piercing eyes, half obscured behind the glass of his horn-rimmed spectacles. I informed him that we had met some two years before, and that I should be grateful for his help on my journey. He looked at me vaguely, smiled, and then suddenly seemed to come into contact with the world we inhabited, and promised to arrange for letters

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123 of introduction to be sent to the Directors of his Institute in all the towns we should be visiting. We talked for a moment at human level, then a glance at his papers, a distant look in his eyes, indicated it was time for us to leave.

815 Monod is an established expert on the following subjects: geology; geography: physical, climatic, regional and human; archaeology; history; marine biology; ethnography; botany; zoology; pre-history; and languages. He has over 400 publications to his name and has published two best-sellers in France. He went down in the bathyscope with Professor Piccard and with Captain Houot. His real love is the Sahara Desert. He must know it better than any other man alive. His first journey into the unknown wastes of the Sahara was in 1923, and by 1930 he had travelled its length and breadth from Algiers to Timbuktu, from Mauretania to Lake Chad. Friends called the gaunt young man, who rode off into the desert wastes alone with a camel, 'Monod le Fou'. Today he is known more respectfully as 'Monod le Saharien'. In the winter of 1954 he completed a phenomenal trek across the desert over a distance never before dared by another white man. With four camels, two Arabs, and a strict daily ration of half a litre of wine, Monod, aged 52, covered 900 kilometres in 47 days.

Theodore Monod has probably done as much as any European to give dignity to the culture and traditions of the tribes of West Africa, and to preserve these traditions for their future inheritors when the steamroller of Western civilization threatens to obliterate them. The Institut Français D'Afrique Noire, which he directs, has a federal museum in Dakar and a [217] network of museums and research centres throughout French Black Africa. It employs scholars in every field of knowledge concerning Africa, and most important of all, it gives African scholars an opportunity to make research into their own customs, traditions and history.

123 Monsieur Pierre Cros, of the Press Section of the Federal 204 Information Services, who was to help us as much as anyone in [659] our travels in West Africa, received us in his small office on the ninth floor of the vast Federal Administration building. What impressed me most about the Federal Information Services was their very considerable knowledge of British West Africa. Fortnightly they published a resumé of the local press of Nigeria,

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The Wollof women of Dakar are some of the most elegant in Africa. The latest styles in their dresses, derived from the Empire line, are worn here by three mannequins of Maison Pierre Grosse. Their elegance is reflected even in the working clothes of a young Wollof mother

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[463]

[4 48 (A)]

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A general view of Dakar, capital of French West Africa

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Wollof women on their way to market in St. Louis

[J 48 (B)]

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Ghana and Sierra Leone, together with articles on these territories that had appeared in the major British papers. 123 [204]

Monsieur Cros told us that he was going that evening to a 'lunch' at the Grand Conseil building, which was being held in honour of the Secretary-General of the French National Assembly. He promised to arrange invitations for us.

Every important official and politician in Dakar was present at the 'lunch'. Black and white mingled freely. M. Cros whisked me from Governor to Inspector General, from an African Colonel to the Secretary-General of the National Assembly, to a representative of Agence France Press and a Senegalese Minister I was to meet the next day. The scene was high-powered and bewildering, but after a few drinks had been consumed the party lost much of its formality, a thing the French, especially in Africa, do not believe in, and I was pulled into conversation by an elderly French Administrator with sleek grey hair, a well-preserved figure, piercing grey eyes, and bronzed complexion. He asked me what I was doing in Dakar.

'I am spending six months travelling in West Africa.'

'Where are you going?'

'I hope to visit most of French West Africa, and spend some time in Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone. I've already been to Gambia and Portuguese Guinea.'

'How do you like Dakar?'

'I was here two years ago. But even in my short absence, it's changed so much. This Grand Conseil was just a mass of scaffolding and concrete when I was last here.'

We both looked at the marbled floor, the graceful pillars, at the group of superbly dressed Africans, many of them with better dress sense than the Frenchmen they were talking to.

'Yes,' he said, suddenly giving words to a sequence of thought, 'It's a revolution, a veritable revolution.'

POLITICS AND POWER

Dakar

Obviously the young man talking to Arnold did not agree. 648 He told him in English: 'We'll have to drive the French out of

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West Africa, or they'll never leave. The Frenchman has taken everything away from the African. Even prostitution,' he sneered, 'is in their hands.'

Arnold asked him what he thought about Ghana. 'Ghana,' he said fiercely, as though to him it was a deeply significant symbol, 'will stand on its own feet, despite the ill-will of the whole world.' Arnold said: 'But I heard some of your African politicians don't want independence on the Ghana pattern. I've even been told that one said that Ghana got its independence too early.'

'Huh!' he interjected. 'They are jealous because Ghana has got what we will never get, unless they take up arms and drive the Frenchmen away like they did in Dien Bien Phu and are now doing in Algeria.'

Quite why the young man was so vicious against the French I did not discover. His conversation with Arnold certainly gave a false impression of the political situation in French West Africa. He seemed almost as unaware of the political revolution that had taken place here in the Senegal, and throughout French Black Africa only six months earlier, as most British Africans are. For on 31st March, in the same month as Ghana got its independence, French West Africans, every adult, went to the polls to elect their own Territorial Assemblies, from which their own Prime Ministers and Governments would be chosen. And although the new law provided only for a limited degree of internal autonomy for each territory—control of the Civil Service and the police, for instance, were reserved for the Governor—it was an irrevocable step that placed the future of French West Africa in African hands. If the young man had doubts about this, he had only to look at the African Minister from the Senegal talking calmly and confidently to the Acting High Commissioner, Monsieur Torre, to reassure himself.

This young African was not alone in his views. I heard it from other students, though never from a politician in power. The French, of course, because of their record in Indo-China and North Africa, often hear such attacks from the Americans who write about French Black Africa. They arrive there, their opinions already formed by a study of French Colonial policy elsewhere, and condemn everything going on in Dakar and the eight

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territories of the Federation. This has made the French very bitter against the Americans. As it is, the French are notoriously anti-American, and nowhere was this more pronounced than in Dakar when I was there. Memories of the incident at Little Rock were still fresh. One official told me triumphantly: 648

'When Holmes, Foster Dulles' plenipotentiary, came to Dakar to patch up the effect of Little Rock, which, I might say, had a profound effect on Africans here, the local people told him that they were astonished that the Federal Government of the U.S.A. could not control a State Governor. Of course,' he continued, a vicious light in his eyes, 'the best thing was at the Youth Conference at Abidjan, in Ivory Coast. The local American Consul went there in his large car, Stars and Stripes flying. When these young Africans talked about independence he clapped, and smiled when they passed resolutions in its favour. Then they called for a vote censuring Little Rock. He had to get up and leave!'

After meeting the young African at the 'lunch' in the Grand Conseil, Arnold was very surprised by the moderate views of Monsieur Doudou Guèye, a leading politician of French Africa's largest party, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africaine, whom we met in his office in the same building. He is President of the Permanent Commission of the Grand Conseil, and a man with a record much more extremist than Nkrumah. He received us in a large office, overlooking the Atlantic, immaculately dressed and radiating an air of efficiency. 665 648

'In French West Africa,' he told us, 'independence is not so simple as in British West Africa, where you have practised indirect rule, preserving much of the old tribal system, the power of the Chiefs, and native law. Here most of that is destroyed. We have had to build up a new life for ourselves. Independence is therefore much more difficult. Anyway I don't think Ghana has much advantage over us. Our new *Loi Cadre* has given internal responsibility to the Africans who, in effect, run everything. The main strings France pulls are economic.'

It all seemed so smooth now, very remote from the fiery words of Arnold's friend. But Doudou Guèye, like many of his party, had been persecuted by the French. He had been in prison during the years 1948, 1949 and 1950. He did not seem bitter

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648 about it, and even waved a letter at me which he said he had just received from his old prison governor.

'If we politicians hadn't been in prison we would never have got what we have today. Other politicians who did not go to prison suffered more than I did.'

He seemed to take a far more mature view of his party's experience of prison than Nkrumah and his 'prison graduates' do. One could see that Doudou Guèye would never parade on French West African Independence Day in a prisoner's hat. Though he and his party members would have much more reason to.

Later we met a leader of R.D.A., with a record much more extreme than that of Doudou Guèye. Gabriel D'Arboussier, Vice-President of the Grand Conseil, had once been as good as a member of the Communist Party. The R.D.A., too, had been very much a fellow-travelling party, which even now is organized on the Communist cell basis. 'We owe a lot to the Communists, who taught us and trained us,' Doudou Guèye had told us. But D'Arboussier, a mulatto from Djenne in Soudan, is no longer a Communist, and R.D.A. has moved steadily away from the left. The Communists hate D'Arboussier today as a traitor to the cause, but this has lost him little, for he is now at the forefront of French African politics.

He received us in his plush office, sat us both in large armchairs, and instead of viewing us from the fortress of his very large desk, sat in the third armchair. He talked in fluent and excellent English. We talked about Africa.

'The great problem of Africa is the creation of a united people and the breakdown of tribal factions. When we stress the need for unity in Africa, I think it is because consciously or unconsciously in Africa it is clear to us that the element of division is very great. We shall have to fight very hard to achieve it.' Arnold: 'Do you think we will ever succeed?' D'Arboussier looked doubtfully at us for a moment. I said I thought that the impact of the various Colonial powers in Africa and the imposition of their culture and tradition in the African peoples would make unity difficult, at least in the immediate future. He nodded agreement.

'What is important,' D'Arboussier said, 'is the African way of

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living. What we must preserve completely is that, though, of course, I realize, it is no longer possible to treat the economic and political problems of Africa on the level of the tribes. However, what Africa could give to the West, is the sense of democratic function. People tend to laugh at the institution of the village palaver house, but it is the great school of politics. Decisions there are taken on the basis not of a majority but of unanimity. They will talk night and day till the last man in the village is convinced their common action is right.'

Arnold looked at D'Arboussier somewhat suspiciously when he talked largely about the 'African' and his personality. As a Creole, Arnold, I think, detected D'Arboussier's own dilemma, as a Mulatto, who was not sure where he belonged. To Africa or Europe?

For a man who had once been a Communist sympathizer D'Arboussier was surprisingly moderate. There was no talk of independence or an immediate rupture with France.

'We have decided that absolute independence would be a burden,' he told me.

One of my best friends in Dakar was a young Toucouleur, of my own age, who was a member of the newly formed Partie Africane de L'Independence, which was in complete opposition to the creation of any Franco-African Community, who believed that France exploited Africa, and the sooner Africa was rid of her the better.

He himself was extremely well-educated, with no immediately obvious motive for bitterness against the French. Indeed, it was a Frenchman who introduced me to him. He took me to the headquarters of the party, a small bookshop in a side street of Dakar. It was well decorated, and its shelves were lined with books on Marxist Socialism and Communism, a lesser Colletts. Mixed with picture books about Rumania and Russia and the Chinese way of life were the French Classics. Mahjemout Diop, one of the leaders of this party, as yet with little influence, received me in his office and lectured me on the evils of French administration. There was something clandestine about our encounter in this side office and yet with Africans in power at the Grand Conseil, and with an African Prime Minister of the Senegal I could not help thinking his anti-colonialist crusade a

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665 little misguided. He handed me a copy of the party manifesto.
648 On the front it read:

> 'At the historic moment of Bandung and of the Colonial and Imperialist system, at the moment when political confusion submerges Black Africa under French domination, our duty as Africans obliges us to bring before the masses of our country the problem of national independence and the transformation of our economy into a socialist economy.'

[204] He also handed me a copy of the party newspaper, *La Lutte*, 'The Battle', which is surprisingly well produced at an intellectual level. It even had an article explaining why Sputnik stayed up. On another page a cartoon demonstrated party feeling towards France: Picture I. Thin, Belsen figure, in casque colonial, sucks from straw the lifeblood of Africa—Picture II. Fatter version of this Frenchman leaves for home, a small Africa behind him.

But the magazine was directed not only against France. Jibes were made at the Minister of the Interior of the Senegal, and at the high wages paid to Ministers. Mahjemout Diop was later arrested on the orders of the Minister of the Interior.

OLD SENEGAL

Dakar—Gorée—St. Louis

369 [491] 361 [175] Our third afternoon in Dakar, Arnold and I took the afternoon ferry to Gorée, a tiny island embraced by the bay of Dakar. This island, which until the turn of the century was better known than Dakar itself, was discovered in 1444 by Dinis Dias, one of the early Portuguese explorers, and commands the entrance to the port of Dakar, so that for long it was prized as the most strategic of islands on the Guinea Coast. Today it is no more than an historical relic, but whether against a clear blue sky or of dark grey rain clouds massing for an assault on the mainland, it serves as a reminded that though in Africa the revolution has taken place largely over the last ten years, its groundwork has been prepared by centuries of contact with Europeans and their way of life.

The small ferry was crammed with trippers, armed with

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Goree

expensive cameras and an intriguing assortment of seaside equipment. The boat ploughed through the brisk waters of the bay before it pulled alongside the jetty, at Gorée, where the passengers climbed out with great difficulty because of the swell in the ice-blue waters, so transparent that I could see myriad fish lurking on the sandy bottom. I was cluttered up with cameras, so a tall, light-skinned African helped me on to the jetty. His fine, almost European features revealed that he was a Fulani, a curious tribe of cattle nomads to be found throughout West Africa. Some of the tribe have settled in the towns, as a superior aristocracy. The young man, a guide book in his hand, introduced himself as Seyni Djibey, and asked me whether this was the first time I had been to Gorée.

'No, I've been here before. Two years ago,' I replied.

'But you're not French,' he remarked with some astonishment. He looked at Arnold. 'I could tell because of him. The clothes he is wearing are not what the French Africans would wear,' he added.

'Where do you come from?' I asked.

'From Niamey, that's in Niger, you know!' he replied.

'Yes, I'm going there,' and before he could ask me why, I asked him a similar question.

'But what are you doing here in Senegal?'

'I just came to look. I had leave from my job, so I decided to spend some money I had saved up, travelling around West Africa. I've already been to Bamako. Next week I'm going to Conakry and Abidjan. I wanted to come here and see what Gorée is like.'

He walked towards the house of a friend to whom I had been given an introduction. The beach was littered with naked bodies, white and black, roasting in the sun that glared through a thin veil of cloud. Overlooking the right-hand wall of the beach was the picturesque Hostelerie du Chevalier de Boufflers, from which stretched in a generous semi-circle an intricacy of old houses, each one a perfect example of nineteenth-century French colonial architecture, with crumbling plaster façades, slatted shutters, large sash windows and delicately patterned verandas. Old wrought iron lamps clung to the walls of each house, giving a strangely Victorian atmosphere to the narrow street.

Seyni, looking up from his guide book, pointed to an old fort.

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369 'That must be the Batterie Nord.'

[699] As we passed a gang of prisoners shuffled through its main gates outside which lay rusting cannons, their barrels stopped with cement. In the shade of palm trees at the entrance to the fort a guard played draughts with one of the local inhabitants, whilst the wives of the prisoners washed clothes or prepared their evening meal. Only the grim bars set deep into the dark stonework of the fort indicated that it was used as a prison: otherwise the entrance to the fort was more like the gate of a Moslem city, such was the coming and going.

I took some photographs and remembered with amusement an account of a former Earl of Scarborough's visit to Gorée in his diary, *The Cruise of the African Witch, 1890*:

> 'As I was taking a photo of a part of the island a nigger had the audacity to tell me that no one was allowed to photograph in the neighbourhood of the fort, and when I asked him who he was, he said: "Je suis Français". I sent him about his business and he ran to tell the guard in the fort. Europeanized niggers are obnoxious and often intolerable.'

Eighteen-ninety is a long time ago for Dakar and Gorée, though unhappily in East Africa such sentiments are still not out of date.

As I walked down the rubble-filled streets of the island, the occasional perfectly preserved balcony or heavy wooden shutters conjured up vivid memories of the old colonial society that used to inhabit Gorée. Today fat black mammies lean over the balustrades to hang out their washing whilst their naked children play on the rusty cannons encased in the mud and sand of the pavements. From the Rue de Dakar, with its crumbling houses and elegant street lamps, I could see the skyscrapers of the mainland. Above the harbour, fish hawks glided lazily, swooping suddenly with outstretched talons and amazing precision on their prey, whilst in the water bronzed Frenchmen with underwater diving equipment conducted the same operation with less success. In Europe one rarely remarks upon the contrast between history and the present: the two are so constantly juxtaposed as to be unworthy of comment. Yet in West Africa, where nearly

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everything seems to have been built within the last half-century, an island like Gorée, full of historical sites, stands to remind one how long Africa and Europe have been in contact. Gorée itself has been controlled by many masters: the Portuguese from 1444–1595, the Dutch 1597–1677; the French and British at intervals from 1677–1817, when the island was finally ceded to the French by the Treaty of Paris. Many famous explorers including Nuno Tristão, Fernando Po, Bartholomew Dias and Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus, as well as scholars like Camoens and St. Francis Xavier, stayed on the island. A small church was built by Diogo d'Azembuja, the architect of the fort of Elmina on the Gold Coast. The Dutch used Gorée for their trade with the Gold Coast and India, though later it became to its various owners important as a slaving post, as the gracious Maison des Esclaves, built between 1776–1778, witnesses. I was taken there two years ago by an African guide, through a low, damp tunnel into some squalid little cells whose only source of light was from a small grille facing on to the sea; below was a sheer drop on to Atlantic breakers. Into those cells slavers bundled hundreds of miserable wretches, seized from their villages, as often as not by other Africans. There they were imprisoned, their feet held by the heavy balls and chains that still littered the floor, until a ship was ready to take them to the New World. Often more than half of them died on the Middle Passage, and many died waiting in this house because of cold and damp, or just the lack of will to live.

However, in 1794, when Gorée was in French hands, the Revolutionary Convention abolished slavery, and accordingly deprived Gorée of its main source of income. But in 1802 the law was repealed, only to be reinforced again in 1817, so that ironically Gorée, which had been built into a naval base and the administration headquarters of French West Africa, became a major centre for the suppression of the slave trade.

Towards the end of the century Gorée declined at Dakar's expense. By 1929, from having been one of the Quatre Communes, the others being St. Louis, Rufisque and Dakar, sending representatives to the French National Assembly and enjoying equal rights with Frenchmen, it had so declined in importance that it was incorporated into the Municipality of Dakar.

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369 [633] Today Gorée is a residential suburb of Dakar, where administrators and merchants live. In the hot sun of the afternoon, Gorée, an island of unopened shutters, of lazy negroes passing life away in sleep, and of buildings that look as though they would crumble in one's hands like a hard-baked sand pie, was little more than an historical relic.

Gorée was a dead town. More pathetic, I found, was St. Louis, the capital of the Senegal, which is a dying town. I flew to St. Louis for a week-end, leaving Arnold in Dakar because his attack of dysentery had not yet cleared up.

[361] I loved St. Louis, a quiet little city on an island in the estuary of the river Senegal, which bounds the northern frontier of the territory to which it has given its name. I remembered it clearly from my previous visit, a city with no important industries, and few modern buildings to detract from the quiet serenity of the cool, colonial style houses, heavily shuttered against the fierce sun of the desert. In two years not much had changed. The houses had crumbled a little more, adding to, rather than detracting from its dignity as capital of two territories, a unique honour. The governments of Senegal and neighbouring Mauretania are to be found there.

369 633 But the serenity of this ancient city, which dates back to 1659, that had struck me so forcibly on my first visit two years ago had gone. The Mauretanians' decision to transfer their capital to Nouakchott, in their own territory, was something the St. Louisians could understand, even if it did mean a loss of income to their city. But when their own government decided to move their capital to Dakar, the Federal Capital, the population was profoundly shocked. I found them extremely bitter about it. The provincial calm of the city was for once shattered, and its inhabitants had but one topic—the transfer—and the prospect of seeing their city die, for St. Louis depends largely on the administration for its income.

One man told me with extreme bitterness: 'Dakar has killed Gorée and Rufisque. Now it will kill us.' Since the creation of a port at Dakar, the chief *raison d'être* of St. Louis has been as an administrative centre. Take away the administration and the town could not survive.

My first afternoon in St. Louis I saw M. Valdiodio N'Diaye,

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Acting Prime Minister of the Senegal, and cousin of Pierre Njie in Bathurst. I asked him what his party would do to save St. Louis from becoming a second Gorée. N'Diaye replied confidently: 'My government intends to build up St. Louis as a new and prosperous economic centre for the Senegal valley, just as Kaolak is the centre of the Saloum and Zuiginchor of the Casamance. We plan to build a great dam at Dagana which will open up the Senegal to extensive cultivation and St. Louis will not die. Of course the money for the dam will have to come from France. You see,' M. N'Diaye continued, 'St. Louis is really rather absurdly placed, lying at the extreme north and the extreme west of the territory. It is "doublement periphique", whilst Dakar is the economic centre of the Senegal.'

'Already, of course, the transfer is proving more difficult than they thought,' a member of an old and respected St. Louisian family told me. 'There is little enough room in Dakar as it is without moving the Senegalese Government there. They'll have to take hotels over for ministries. I don't think this transfer is necessary. After all, America has its Washington and New York, Switzerland its Berne and Geneva. Why should not Senegal have its St. Louis and Dakar? If they carry out this transfer, St. Louis will be little more than an historical souvenir like Gorée.'

M. Babacar Saye, Mayor of St. Louis and member of the Opposition party, told me with considerable feeling: 'St. Louis has played a great part in the history of the Senegal. Even if it has lost the opportunity of economic development as a port to Dakar, it is the spiritual head of the Senegal. If St. Louis had not existed in the history of the Senegal and French West Africa there would be no Federation today. It has been a bastion of fidelity to France. St. Louisians penetrated every corner of West Africa on her behalf. It has had an immense moral and psychological influence on the present good relations between France and West Africa.'

This attitude I found supported by a young African official from Dahomey, whom I met in the Ministry of Finance. He had travelled all over French West and Equatorial Africa. 'The Senegal,' he said, 'has always been at the head of politics in French West Africa. It has been the *avant-garde* of all Black Africa. After all it was the first to send black Deputies like Blaise Diagne to the

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Metropolis. Until recently the African élite has always come from St. Louis. It is a sort of spiritual centre of Black Africa. It had the first school—Lycée Faidherbe. And in 1866 it was given the first Hotel de Ville of the French Union. It is the cradle of the French Union. It would be a tragedy if it died.'

To such men as these it seems scandalous that St. Louis with its great history and traditions should give way to a parvenue like Dakar. Of all West African cities St. Louis is the one with the most illustrious and fascinating history. It was called St. Louis after the great French King, Louis XIII, in the middle of the seventeenth century. However, in the following century it began to expand into a town whose inhabitants were a distinct race, comparable to the Creoles of Sierra Leone. White and black intermarried to form a group known as the St. Louisians. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these were the great families of the Senegal, though today they are losing importance. Names like Carpot, Descanet, Deves, Guillabert and Crespin are still remembered with respect in St. Louis.

By the end of the eighteenth century the town had more than 7,000 inhabitants and in 1778 a mayor, who had to be chosen from the local population, was charged with the maintenance of good relations between the people and the Governor. In 1833 all inhabitants of St. Louis were given the status of French citizens.

Perhaps the most important date for St. Louis and for West Africa was 1854, when General Faidherbe was appointed Governor. Today his mark is still firmly on St. Louis. The ordered layout of the city and its streets were his work. The large bridge connecting the island on which St. Louis stands to the mainland is named after him. The city's most important and famous school is the Lycée Faidherbe. And even now one can listen to old folk sitting on the benches of the park, in which his statue stands, telling tales of the great General, who had fought against the famous Toucouleur chief, El Hadj Omar and brought Senegal, Soudan and Mauretania into the French orbit. Perhaps some of these old people are his own descendants, for he is reputed to have been a prolific father.

By 1878 St. Louis had grown to a city of 16,000 inhabitants, and despite the rapid expansion of Dakar and Rufisque farther down the coast, there was little to worry about the future.

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down the coast, there was little to worry about the future. And the creation of the Federal Government there marked its apogee. Five years later when the Federal Government was transferred to Dakar, St. Louis began its long decline which, when the Government is transferred, will be final.

As I walked along the old streets of St. Louis recalling vividly New Orleans, past old houses, their plaster façades beautiful with the patina of a century, and along the river that divides the island from the mainland with its brightly painted fishing boats, I could sympathize with the inhabitants of St. Louis. I could understand their pride; and their fears that their city might die. But at the same time the Government's desire to move into the economic centre of Senegal and the Administrative centre of the Federation, seemed to me a realistic one.

ECONOMICS OF THE REVOLUTION

I returned to Dakar for an appointment with the High Commissioner of French West Africa whose office was on the ninth floor of the Administrative building. When I arrived I was shown into a small ante-room by a messenger dressed in khaki.

'The High Commissioner will see you soon,' he assured me.

Within two minutes a similarly dressed messenger beckoned me towards a large swing door. I pulled it open, only to be confronted by another, a foot in front of me. I pushed this open, and entered a large, well-windowed room. For a moment I could see no one. Then a tall, grey-haired man, looking very much like a university professor, came forward towards me, his right hand outstretched. M. Gaston Cusin, High Commissioner for French West Africa, led me to a large chair and, with a degree of informality that put me entirely at ease, he began to talk of the problems of French West Africa. To him, a former Director of Economic Affairs in France, it was clear that West Africa was largely an economic problem. He pointed to a large map of West Africa:

'We are hoping to develop iron reserves here in Mauretania; there in Guinea we want to open up bauxite reserves, in Dahomey

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we plan to build a modern port; and there in the Soudan we hope to develop livestock for export. For that we would need a number of large refrigeration units here in Dakar.'

Thus he continued in detail all over the vast area of French West Africa stretching from St. Louis to the Chad, from the Sahara to the Guinea Coast, with an area of nearly 1,840,000 square miles, and a meagre population of 18 millions. I pointed to Nigeria and Ghana.

'I am afraid we British took the best bits of West Africa. Yet we haven't put nearly as much money into it by comparison. I wonder what Nigeria would be like if you French had got it?'

His eyes looked longingly at the large chunk of red.

'That would be something marvellous!' he said. Since the war the French have poured money into West Africa. Private funds have accounted for a lot, but FIDES, the equivalent of our Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, has contributed more than £175,000,000 to these territories, and together with other public funds the total of capital investment (not from private sources) is more than £300,000,000, for a large, but poor and underpopulated territory.

This heavy capital investment has created large cities like Dakar, Abidjan and Conakry. The Africans have come into contact not only with urban life, but with industry. In Dakar there has been a minor industrial revolution. In the past six years, largely because of this, the city's population has swollen to nearly 300,000. Africans have flooded into the city seeking work, attracted by tales of its gay life or lured by its glamour and the prospect of easy money.

I went down to the large brewery in Dakar, to see a modern industry with Africans as employees.

One of the managers there replied to my question, why weren't there any Africans in senior positions in the brewery. 'We have great difficulty in finding Africans to fill our managerial vacancies. You see, though many go to Paris they nearly all want to become lawyers, doctors, and officials. Very few are interested in becoming technicians. We would pay for their studies if we could find suitable candidates—you know, all part of the *Loi Cadre*. We must Africanize!'

'But haven't you found any good enough?'

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'Oh yes, our sister company in Abidjan has sent a young African to train in a large brewery in France.'

'What is your labour like?'

'Not so good. They don't seem to have much interest in their work.'

I remembered my discussion with Babacar Saye, Mayor of St. Louis, who told me that though he was a Socialist, he believed that at the present time capitalism had an essential role in the country. 'If we are to improve the conditions of the proletariat capitalism is a necessity, but this improvement cannot be speeded up except to the extent that the profit from capital is used towards the satisfying of the indispensable needs of the workers. Therefore it is necessary that the worker feels that he is complementary to the capitalist—it is up to the capitalist to make him understand this.'

To me this seems one of the most important factors in the industrialization of West Africa. The African from the tribal background is essentially an individual with a distinct position in his tribal group or village. Though he appreciates the money he earns in industry, psychologically he does not like being treated as a mere cog in a machine, losing his identity. If he could be given some indication that he is as indispensable to the firm as the manager, he would work hard. As Mr. C. O. Van der Plas, the United Nations Official in the Gambia, once observed: 'It is curious that the African running his own little enterprise works literally like a black, and takes on enormous responsibilities.' Yet if he is taken on as a cog in a vast machine, he becomes slack and Europeans call him the most inefficient and expensive labour in the world. It seems to me that a lot depends on the relations between the worker and the managerial staff.

Two years before I had visited a large shoe factory in neighbouring Rufisque with Mr. David Pearson, the British Consul responsible for liaison between British and French territories in West Africa. The factory was sited on the outskirts of the town opposite a huge cement works which belched forth pastel smoke at an angry sky. We entered a courtyard where hides of every colour were lying in the sun to dry. A Czech employee of the firm, which has its origins in Czechoslovakia, met us and led us into a gloomy shed where flabby hides, a hideous grey green in

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colour, flopped on the floor like lumps of spittle. Others, like them, were being cured in evil vats or stripped in heavy mangles. I examined one of the skins stretched out on the floor. The Czech pointed to three large holes in its surface.

'They are not good, these skins. Very stiff. They come from the North Senegal and the Fula herdsmen will not learn that the cow must be looked after if you want to make good shoes from it. They are only good for cheap shoes. We have to get the better models from our European factories.'

We emerged from the foetid gloom of the curing section into the dyeing room, full of sheets of leather, which an African was busy spraying scarlet, yellow, grey or blue. Another was trimming the coloured hides before they were sent to dry.

We followed our guide into a long hall, which reverberated to the rat-ti-tat of a hundred sewing machines, manned exclusively by Africans.

'Are most of your employees Africans?' I asked.

'On this work, yes. But not in the executive. And on some of the more skilled jobs we have to have Europeans.'

'Are they good workers?'

'Very good, though they cannot tackle the more difficult jobs. I believe they are better farther down the Coast. But we have nothing to complain about.'

And from the rate those shoes were coming off the production line, I was sure they hadn't.

'How many shoes do you produce a year?'

'About 300,000. Most of them are sandals,' he said, pointing to some scarlet slippers which an African was packing into boxes.

'These we also produce in great quantities.'

He showed me a pink, green and sky blue slipper with a large plastic pompom where the big toe would be. These were wildly popular with the fashion-mad Jollof women at the time. Bata's are very much at the mercy of their whims, though they have the consolation that supply rarely exceeds demand.

As I watched one African youth deftly turning a leather sandal on a stitching machine, I could not help thinking of the old Mandinka leather-worker in Dakar's market, laboriously sewing tough slippers as his father had done before him and as he was bound to do by virtue of his caste. Once he exercised a monopoly

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The great mosque of Djenne, in French Soudan (which is a lesser Mecca for West African Muslims)

Amadou Hampaté Ba, Soudan's leading Muslim theologian

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Though Djenne's mosque was designed by a French administrator, both its exterior and interior are typical of the Soudanese style of architecture

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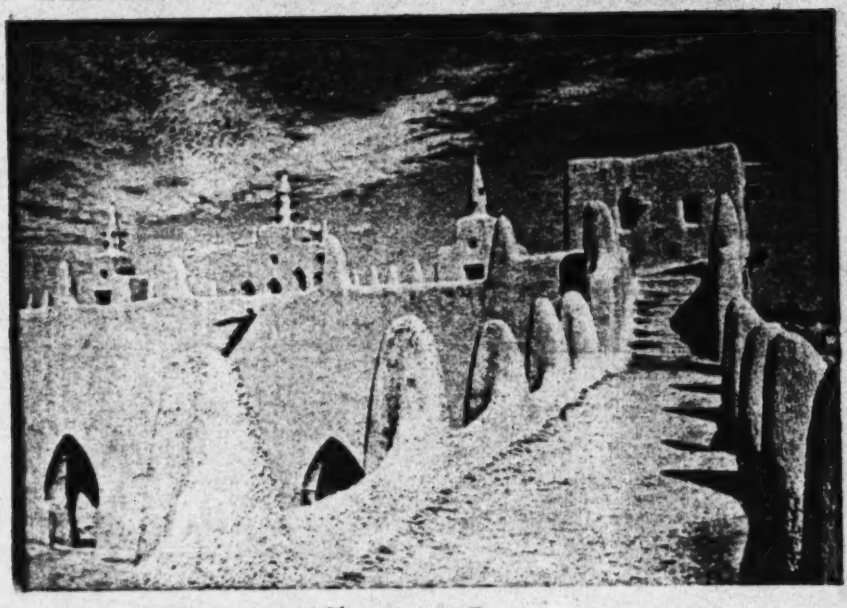

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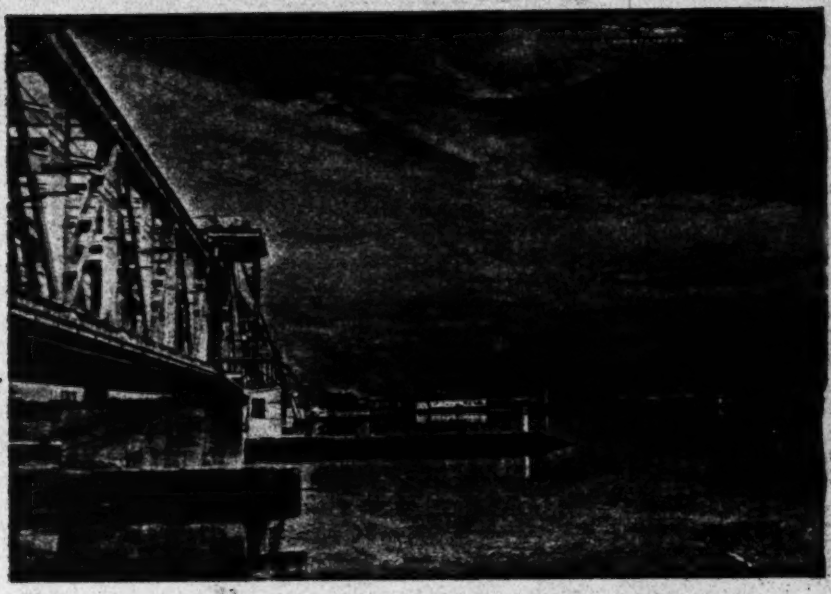

The Niger is vital to the economy of French Soudan. At Sansending it has been harnessed by a great dam to irrigate over 100,000 acres of cotton and rice. It is also an excellent highway of commerce, navigable by paddle steamers such as the one the author travelled on *(below)*

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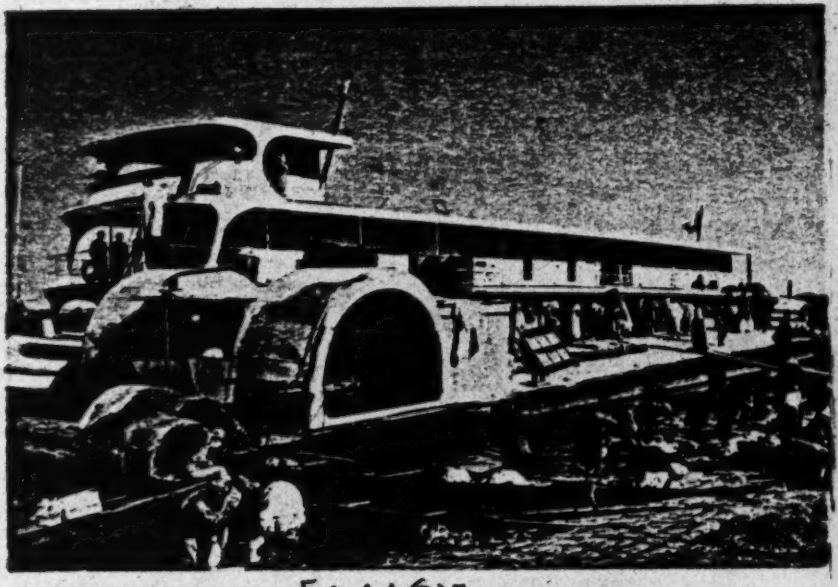

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for no-one would undertake his work unless he belonged to that caste. But the laws of supply and demand do not respect hereditary caste-rights. Mass production and cheaper shoes dictate the old leather-worker's redundance. Soon he will fade into the obscurity of a rural industry, a supplier of goods for the local arts and crafts store.

This was nowhere more evident than in Dakar which has a large number of factories. Here one can see the new Africa rising up. The young negro comes from the bush, illiterate and half naked, living much as his ancestors before him. Soon he is caught up in the revolution. At first his house may be a small wooden shed, shared with members of his family or tribe on whom he is sponging. But soon he may earn thirteen pounds a month as an unskilled labourer, so that he can afford to take rooms with one of his richer brothers, whose weekly pay packet as a cook is six pounds. And so in Dakar people of all tribes meet in the great metropolis, live next to each other in the crowded Medina, and help to create a new town-life as different from that of the bush as city life in nineteenth-century industrial England was from that of the countryside.

In Dakar I met Diop, a young Jollof, well-educated, but out of work. I asked him how he lived and he told me that he just went from relation to relation each day borrowing money. He had had a job before, but after a quarrel with his employer, an African lawyer, he had had to leave. Each morning he left his wife, pretending to go to work. He deceived her into thinking he still had his job, by bringing home money lent him by relations. He 'borrowed' the equivalent of ten shillings from me, and to my astonishment promptly asked me to lunch the next day. His house, or rather room, was made of wood. Inside, the walls and the floor were covered with a gaily patterned lino. A large double bed and a small divan provided seats. A chest of drawers hung with all the crockery was the only other piece of furniture. On the walls was a large array of photos of friends and relations, all slightly over-exposed to give the effect of a lighter skin. Diop's wife, a ravishing, beautiful girl of nineteen, had spent all morning preparing Jollof rice for us, consisting of rice done in a sort of tomato purée, to which a delicious white fish with a variety of vegetables and a hot pepper sauce were added. A bottle of wine was produced for

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me. Diop, Faye, one of his friends, who was secretary to the local theatre, and I sat round the large bowl eating with spoons. A number of people passed, and one old man came in to watch us.

'That's our Griot,' Diop told me. A Griot is a member of a special caste, to be found in the Jollof and Mandinka tribes, who sings, drums, dances and tells jokes—a sort of family jester.

He started to talk in rapid Jollof and soon Diop and his friend were in hoots of laughter. For his pains the bowl of rice was handed to him, and another man who joined him.

'Who is he?' I asked.

'Another relation. I have to feed him,' Diop replied.

'One of the greatest problems in Dakar,' an official of IFAN had told me, 'is parasitism. A man will come to Dakar and get himself a good job, say at ten pounds a month. He has his immediate family to look after. Then along comes a cousin, and installs himself. An uncle from the bush comes to stay three days, decides he likes Dakar and fails to return to his village. A man like this may find he is supporting between eight and fifteen dependants.'

'I suppose that explains why Dakar's population is much larger than opportunities for work would justify?'

'Yes. It's a great problem, because it prevents any accumulation of capital by Africans. People complain that there is no African bourgeoisie here, that all the trade is in the hands of Lebanese and small Frenchmen. It's largely because an African here cannot, by the laws of hospitality, refuse to give a bed and food to his fellow tribesmen.'

'Of course, in a way that's a good thing, because no one goes hungry, and it's one way of redistributing wealth voluntarily. A sort of voluntary welfare state.'

'Yes, but if the African is to control the economy of his own economy, he must be rid of this scourge.'

In Gorée I met a Frenchman to whom Senegalese soldiers used to come immediately after their discharge from the Army to leave all their new clothes and money, otherwise they would have returned to the town to hear: 'Oh, you are the most wonderful, most bountiful man alive.' After that there would have been little left of their money.

Diop was perhaps a classic example of parasitism. He himself was a borrower, only to have other people borrowing from him.

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was a borrower, only to have other people borrowing from him.

The morning after I had lunch with Diop I went to a Conference in the High Commission on Alcoholism. This, it appeared, was a grave problem in Dakar. The creation of the new Africa has its ugly sides, and this was perhaps one of its most ugly. A favourite drink, named after the local bus service, was the 'Car Rapide'. To make it you mix beer, methylated spirits and a drop of petrol. It is guaranteed to knock you out in one go. In Zuiginchor a more potent drink was made by adding a well-known Parisian perfume to beer.

A day before the Conference *Paris-Dakar*, the local daily newspaper, published an article on alcoholism in M'Backé, a large Senegalese town:

ALCOHOLISM MUST BE FOUGHT

An all out police attack is needed and would be appreciated to seek out and rid our town of a gang of drunks of both sexes who spend their time in the small shops and sordid bars which are hidden all over the town in the guise of restaurants and small eating places.

Most of the proprietors of these cafés add to their miserable occupations that of pimping. Favouring alcoholism, they nevertheless indulge in all revolting forms of debauchery.

In most parts of our town one finds these small cafés nicely divided, serving as homes and places of business.

A few posts in the ground, a roof of polished tiles, a wooden fence and there you have the ideal café.

The interior of these hovels is divided into small compartments with no ventilation and on the ground a few mattresses covered with dirty blankets. The decoration consists of a few old newspapers pasted here and there to keep out the sun. The bar stock lies among packing cases and hidden under the mattresses. In holes made for the purpose are bottles of wine, red, rosé and white, and beer.

To cover up this business known to be officially disliked, the café proprietors keep a kitchen where periodically they prepare meals, hygienically leaving a lot to be desired.

In these sordid places, the atmosphere heavy with noxious smells, they give themselves up to their anti-social pastimes. Debauchery has been given a home here. These are also the rendezvous of scoundrels and receivers of stolen goods.

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After the great Magal de Touba[1] our town inherited bands of homeless among whom were notorious criminals.

Alcoholism was not the only form of moral decadence in a city like Dakar. Actually crimes of violence, robbing and murder were almost unknown. There were rarely any reference to them in the papers, and a police officer assured me that this was true. However, one read frequently of crimes of passion, such as a man stabbing his friend to death in the course of a quarrel.

There was, I was told, an enormous amount of prostitution in Dakar. I was shown one of the city's more notorious brothels in Rebeusse suburb, a rambling shack that had been raided more than once by police. On the whole prostitution is not organized because of legal difficulties. A number of prostitutes were white women, who receive patronage mainly from Lebanese and Syrians. I was told of one who went around the Médina in a small car, serving the local population.

On the other hand homosexuality had a much freer rein, being prevalent amongst Africans, Mauretanians and Europeans alike. In Place Prôtet, the main square of Dakar, young African boys, more often than not Jollofs, could be seen waiting to be picked up. Under the Code Napoleon it is, of course, legal, and in theory presents no problem, though many people are worried by its spread in the city.

Of course, to many of these boys with no work, it is one way of making money. But amongst the Jollofs it seems to be more deeply rooted. Contact with Frenchmen in St. Louis, who often preferred black boys to black mistresses and contact with the Mauretanians may provide an explanation.

Today one can even see Jollof men dressed in women's clothes. I once met one in a small bar outside Dakar. He was obviously pathetically feminine. The Jollof must be used to this since they even have a word for them—Gor-Digen. The elders and faithful Muslims condemn men for this, but it is typical of African tolerance that they are left very much alone by the rest of the people.

One reason for the growing tendency of Jollof men to remain bachelors to an age much older than is usual in Africa, if not for their homosexuality, is the character of the Jollof women.

[1] Celebration of Birth of Prophet.

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their homosexuality, is the character of the Jollof women. They are Africa's most beautiful women: they must also be the most demanding. Few people have much good to say for these elegant *femmes fatales*. They are lazy, selfish and fickle. They dislike housework and many of them stick with their husbands only as long as they are prepared to pay out vast sums for their clothes and jewellery. Since the elegant woman (and every Jollof girl aspires to be that) costs about £100 a year to keep in clothes and jewellery, it is little wonder that Jollof men are seeking wives from other tribes, where competence within the house rather than elegance is the standard by which a woman is judged.

Such is Jollof preoccupation with fashion that there is a fashion house in Dakar with Jollof mannequins. These women are chosen not only for their beauty but for their position in society. For if they come from a good family they are sure to be noticed by other Jollof women in the streets, and immediately the clothes they are wearing will be remarked on, and to Pierre Grosse's shop the fashion-crazy Jollofs will rush.

The Jollof dress originates from St. Louis, when the French re-occupied it after the Napoleonic wars. At that time fashionable ladies were wearing the Empire style with its high waistline and long, flowing dresses. Since then the Jollofs have made this style their national dress. They have the same high waistline, the long dresses, sometimes modified by a bodice, and great candy-floss turbans. To show off their magnificent shoulders they have enlarged the neckline, and puffed up the sleeves, stiffened with starch, to half-moon shapes that stand out crisply from the body. The sleeve is usually dropped off one shoulder to reveal the full beauty of its owner.

Over the dress a great docket or cloak of muslin, tulle or organdie is thrown, usually in a colour contrasting with the dress. Materials are chosen with great care. One has only to see these women in Pierre Grosse's handling great lengths of cloth with expert and tender attention to know that no cheap cotton print can be palmed off on the most discriminating buyers on the West African market.

The Jollof's ensemble is not complete without wig, jewellery and make-up. Wigs are of several designs. The most typical, though not the most frequently seen, are two stiff plaits of horse-

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W 302 hair fixed on either side of the head, from which they protrude like thin curled horns. Another trick is to fix balls of black velvet or twists of black sisal. Strands of soft black silk are commonly used in their coiffure today, and they hang in nearly every small store, a baffling commodity to those unacquainted with Jollof fashions.

W 301 To these wigs the rich and fashionable Jollof woman fixes huge pendants of gold filigree, beautifully worked by the local craftsmen. The really chic touch is a bunch of gold coins—Louis D'Ors, American dollars and Franz-Josephs, or English Guineas—hanging from false plaits over the forehead, preferably coquettishly W [556] to one side. Gold is indispensable to their ensemble. A really wealthy Jollof lady seems to be covered with it: great ear-rings, pin brooches, heavy gold rings on the finger, ear-rings and tiny rings placed all round the outside of the ear and Tudor toe-rings.

W 302 A Jollof woman spends considerable time on her make-up. [304] Her lips are tattooed with indigo, sometimes even on their pink insides. A thin blue line is tattooed on to the lower eyelid, immediately under the lashes, making her eyes seem much larger than they are. Eyelashes are painted with black dye, and the white palms of the hands and the soles of the feet are stained black as well. Their long, bejewelled fingers are crowned with nails W painted with red nail varnish or an orange stain.

291 This ensemble gives the Jollof woman something of the 177 gracious artificiality of appearance that marked the fashions of the Empire period. Geoffrey Gover,[1] in his book *Africa Dances*, described their behaviour as continually provocative. 'Their W [839] movement, their glances, their sighs, their manner of speaking, are all, almost subconsciously, alluring.'

So striking is the Jollof dress that it has been adapted by African women all over the Senegal, and is copied as far distant as Niger and Ivory Coast.

A CULTURAL DILEMMA

Dakar

S 545 One evening Arnold and I went to the Théâtre du Palais, a [368] small, neat theatre owned by the Government in the centre of [655] Dakar. We were to see a production of tribal dancing by Sereres

[1] [this should read Gorer--Analyst]

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called 'Les Ballets Sereres du Sine Saloum,' a group of dancers who had won the Territorial Cup in 1957.

The theatre was packed. I was sitting next to an ample Jollof matron, a small child strapped to her back, its tiny nose buried in the pink muslin of her dress. Another child sat on her knee, beturbanned and clothed just like its mother. From the woman's forehead dangled three shining American dollars. Unfortunately a similar Jollof woman sat immediately in front of me, her black horsehair wig and tall tulle turban almost totally obscuring my view. A strong scent of 'Bint El Sudan' manufactured in East London perfumed the room as the curtains rose to the first dance, 'Love and its Caprices', which was to be the theme of the evening. The variations, the programme told me, were to include '*Allo M'Bissine*'—'My fiancée has beaten me because a boy who loves me told me "Hello M'Bissine" ', and later '*Khodia Kha Lola*'—'Why do you cry Khodia? Only the Gods understand what a tear says'. Ending with an initiation dance of future circumcision candidates. One of the most memorable dances was a solo by a woman with a baby strapped to her back, its head swaying backwards and forwards like a punch ball. The child uttered not a murmur as its mother danced into a frenzy, singing at the top of her voice, and in the background a corps of drums beat an hysterical rhythm. It was an entertaining evening, with a beautiful dance of a slight youth, his black-brown body shining sleekly in the glow of the footlights, contrasting with the powdered copper of his lissom partner, a girl of singular beauty with entrancing opalescent eyes.

After the performance there was a cast party to which Faye, the young secretary of the theatre, invited me. The dancers, various guests, European and African, drank bottles of Coca-Cola and orange squash. Amongst them was Ka Abdou Anta.

He was a handsome young man, but he dragged continuously at a cigarette and his teeth were discoloured with nicotine. His jacket, once well cut, was misshapen by papers stuffed into the pockets. My first meeting with Ka had been two years before but we had not been introduced. He was rehearsing a scene from his play *La Fille des Dieux*, which he was producing for the Théâtre du Palais. It was highly symbolic: a somewhat uneasy compromise between tribal metaphysics and the classical French

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536 theatre. But the writing was powerful and distinguished. My most vivid memory of Ka at that time was an ear-shattering torrent of abuse directed at his leading lady: 'Pas de Fred Astaire ici. Ce n'est pas le Music Hall.'

Today that play is a thing of the past, which nevertheless brought him fame. Now he is engrossed in a piece about a young schoolteacher who is sent to a pagan animist village in the south of the Senegal, to found its first school. The play centres on the conflict between the educated teacher and the local witchdoctor who opposes the school. Deep in Ka's intellect is a striking preoccupation with the conflict of occidental reason with the seemingly irrational metaphysics of the forest and the bush.

Ka was seized by numerous other friends so we agreed to meet the following day at a café in the Avenue William Ponty, Dakar's main thoroughfare.

[547] The small café was crowded. Across the street the Café de Paris with its large, bad painting of Montmartre, was half empty and its clientele, sitting at the iron street tables, stared at us with vague interest. Ka was talking animatedly about nineteenth-century Russian novelists and the decline of Russian literature today. He was very typically '*rive gauche*' and indeed we might well have been in St. Germain des Prés.

'Of course, I think that Huxley is more essentially English than Graham Greene,' my companion continued in a new vein.

Later I went with Ka to his room in a small, dingy hotel in the back streets of Dakar. 'I prefer living here, away from my relations. At least one is free.' I wondered whether it wasn't because it reminded him of his life in Paris.

Together we read his latest play about Chaka, in which he treats the great Zulu as a narcissist. Once again I was struck by the power of his writing, the economy of his style. We fingered through copies of *Présence Africaine*, *Traits d'Union* and *Afrique en Marche* where he and his fellow intellectuals have their works published.

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668 571 Most striking of all is the cultural revolution, so marked in Dakar, but gaining momentum from all parts of the French West African Federation. Ka Abdou Anta is a part of this revolution, which has produced a generation, albeit small, of intellectuals who can vie on equal terms with their counterparts in Europe.

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Their grounding in French culture is superb. It is evident in their writing and in the exacting logic of their minds which sometimes, as so often with the French, can lead them to points of profound illogicality. We have nothing comparable in British West Africa. The creative output of these French Africans, good or bad, literary or scientific, is immense, especially if one considers that the whole of French West Africa has a population just equal to that of Northern Nigeria. Some of their leaders, like Léopold Sédar Senghor, stand on intellectual pedestals in France at the foot of which even Jean Paul Sartre sometimes worships. The reasons for this aspect of the revolution are not altogether difficult to discover. The French have, as opposed to the British, always been assimilationists. 'La France entend conduire les peuples dont elle a la charge.' French culture was fed to these young men and their success today is a tribute to the success of the French 'civilizing mission'. The other important factor is that French intellectuals have on the whole been negrophiles, and African art and culture has long enjoyed a vogue in France.

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Today French Africans have a striking confidence in their intellectual prowess that one rarely remarks in the British West African equivalent. They know French culture like Frenchmen, but, in the words of M. Alioune Diop, the editor of *Présence Africaine*, 'It is necessary that we black men affirm that we alone can interpret our own culture.' And this interpretation seems largely to involve a return to the past such as Cheick Anta Diop, a much respected Senegalese writer, has advocated. In a sense Ka is involved in this return, this new movement. For him and his fellows the burning question becomes: Will this new generation of intellects ever derive anything from such a return? Or indeed are they in any better position to grasp the essentials of their traditional culture than the French negrophiles who first made them aware of the values of their own art.

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An African professor at the University of Dakar, Monsieur Alassane N'Daw, remarked in an article 'Un Africain devant la Culture Française' published in the journal *L'Education Africaine*, that when he held a discussion with his philosophy class on Malraux's views on Negro art there was 'no enthusiasm, nor even any particular interest, but rather general scepticism'. One of his pupils confessed that when he visited the museum at Abomey in

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668 Dahomey he experienced no aesthetic pleasure from Negro art, but was rather struck by its crudities. Indeed Professor N'Daw had difficulty in explaining to his students that European enthusiasm for African art was serious.

[571] Earlier in his article he points out the difficulty of the African intellectual who is torn between two cultures: the call of the past demanding fidelity to Africa, and the fascination of Western culture in which he has been educated and one of whose languages he uses to express himself. He is usually much more strongly drawn towards the latter.

In essentials these intellectuals are Frenchmen. They are living in a modern, occidentalized world far apart from the tribal, agricultural society that produced this art. Can they go back and at the same time go forward? Is there anything in the past that is appropriate to the new Africa they are trying to construct? This is their dilemma.

In Dakar the revolution is almost complete. What matters for these Africans are the years of reconstruction that lie ahead. Perhaps this vigorous young generation of intellectuals would do well to look to a better future than to a past from which they are almost totally divorced.